

Message Text

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AMCONSUL UDORN

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FOL MSG SENT ACTION BANGKOK FROM CHIANG MAI SEP 21 IS REPEATED
TO YOU:

QUOTE

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E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, TH, LA

SUBJECT: REFUGEE CAMPS: A PROBLEM FOR FUTURE YEARS?

1. SUMMARY; A RECENT VISIT TO NAN AND UTTRADIT PROVINCES CONFIRMS THAT SMALL NUMBERS OF LAO REFUGEES CONTINUE TO ENTER THAILAND, THAT LIFE IN THE CAMPS IS STILL DULL AND DREARY BUT FOOD ADEQUATE, AND THAT NO ONE HAS ANY IDEAS ABOUT A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM. THE CONCLUSION CAN ONLY BE THAT MANY OF THOSE PEOPLE MAY SPEND A GOOD PART OF THEIR LIVES IN SUCH CAMPS.

2. DURING MY INITIAL VISIT TO NAN AND UTTRADIT PROVINCES SEVERAL THAI AND ONE UN OFFICIAL MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS;

-SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF MEO REFUGEES CONTINUE TO FILTER ACROSS THE BORDER. THE DISTRICT OFFICER
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IN PUA REPORTS THAT FIVE HUNDRED MORE ENTERED HIS

DISTRICT IN THE LAST WEEKS OF AUGUST AND ARE NOW IN THE CAMP AT NAM YAO. ANOTHER ONE THOUSAND ARE THOUGHT TO BE IMMEDIATELY ACROSS THE BORDER FROM PUA PROVINCE AWAITING AN OPPORTUNITY TO SLIP THROUGH LAO COMMUNIST BORDER PATROLS.

-FOOD SUPPLIES ARE GENERALLY ADEQUATE. HOWEVER, THE UN MAN ON THE SCENE, JACQUE MOCHET, IS CONCERNED ABOUT FUTURE BUDGETS, ESPECIALLY AS VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS DECREASE AS PEOPLE LOSE INTEREST IN THE PROBLEMS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA.

-THE LOCAL THAI POPULATION CONTINUES TO BE CRITICAL OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED MEO REFUGEES. THE THAI VILLAGER, USUALLY UNAWARE OF THE UN'S FUNDING ROLE IN SUCH ASSISTANCE, COMPLAINS OF CONTRASTS BETWEEN HELP PROVIDED REFUGEES AND THE LACK OF ASSISTANCE TO THE THAI POPULATION. SUCH LOCAL OPPOSITION ALSO INTERFERES WITH EFFORTS TO MAKE THE CAMPS MORE SELF SUFFICIENT, ESPECIALLY SUCH SUGGESTIONS AS PROVIDING RESIDENTS OF THE CAMP LANDS WHICH COULD BE PLANTED IN RICE OR OTHER CROPS.

-WHILE REFUGEES ARE ANXIOUS TO GET OUT OF THE CAMPS, THEY APPEAR TO HAVE ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT THERE WILL BE NO MORE IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES. IN FACT, SOME HAVE LOST INTEREST IN SUCH AS POSSIBILITY AFTER RECEIVING LETTERS FROM THOSE WHO HAVE GONE TO THE UNITED STATES COMPLAINING OF THEIR NEW LIFE IN THAT COUNTRY. THE NEW HOPE IS FRANCE AND CAMP RESIDENTS SEEM UNABLE TO REACH THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION THAT, IF LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES IS NOT PARTICULARLY ATTRACTIVE FOR A MEO TRIBESMAN, NEITHER WOULD LIFE IN FRANCE BE.

-NO ONE IS THINKING OF PERMANENT SOLUTIONS. THAI OFFICIALS ARE NOT WILLING OR READY TO LOOK AT WAYS THE REFUGEES MIGHT BE ABSORBED INTO THE THAI ECONOMY, AND THERE IS NO REAL POSSIBILITY THAT MORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAN A HANDFUL WILL BE ALLOWED TO MIGRATE TO FRANCE OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY.

3. COMMENT; AS THINGS NOW STAND, THESE REFUGEE CAMPS

ARE BECOMING A PERMANENT PROBLEM WHICH THE THAIS WILL BE FACING LONG INTO THE FUTURE, PERHAPS TWENTY OR MORE YEARS.

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